

## Integrating Employee Well-Being into HRM for Effective Distance Working Implementation

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Info Article	Abstract
<i>History Article:</i> Submitted Revised Accepted	<p>Purpose - The growing adoption of remote work has raised important questions regarding the role of human resource management (HRM) practices in safeguarding employee well-being. While well-being-oriented HRM has been recognized as an essential framework for supporting happiness, health, and social connectedness in traditional organizational settings, its relevance in remote work arrangements remains ambiguous. The reduced physical presence and visibility of employees in remote contexts may diminish the effectiveness of such practices, thereby warranting a deeper empirical investigation.</p> <p>Aims - This study seeks to examine whether well-being-oriented HRM maintains its capacity to enhance employee well-being in remote working environments, as compared to conventional, on-site contexts. More specifically, it aims to evaluate how distinct domains of well-being-oriented HRM are associated with different facets of employee well-being — including psychological well-being (happiness, job satisfaction, and engagement), physical well-being (strain and health), and relational well-being (social connectedness). Additionally, the moderating role of remote work intensity is assessed to determine whether variations in the extent of remote work influence these relationships.</p> <p>Design - The empirical analysis was conducted using a two-wave dataset collected from 258 Indonesian state-owned manufacturing enterprises. By differentiating between remote and non-remote work settings, the study applies a comparative lens to assess both the direct associations of well-being-oriented HRM with well-being outcomes and the potential moderating influence of remote work intensity. This approach allows for a nuanced understanding of how HRM practices function across varying organizational work arrangements.</p> <p>Findings - The results indicate that well-being-oriented HRM continues to exert a positive influence on employee well-being in remote work contexts,</p>
<i>Keywords:</i> <i>Distance working;</i> <i>HRM; well-being;</i> <i>job</i> <i>satisfaction;</i> <i>engagement;</i> <i>strain; social</i> <i>isolation</i>	

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particularly in terms of happiness (engagement and job satisfaction) and health (strain reduction). However, variations emerge across domains of HRM, as certain practices appear more effective in enhancing happiness and health-related outcomes than others.

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## Introduction

Distance working—frequently referred to as remote work or telecommuting (Gajendran & Harrison, 2015)—has witnessed significant growth, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic compelled large segments of the workforce to operate from home (Eurofound, 2020). This form of work arrangement produces diverse consequences for workers. On the one hand, it may generate positive outcomes such as enhanced autonomy and improved work-life balance (Eurofound, 2020; Gajendran & Harrison, 2015; Sardeshmukh et al., 2014). On the other hand, Distance working may also result in adverse experiences, including elevated technological demands and the risk of social isolation (Becker, Belkin et al., 2022; Day et al., 2014; Wong et al., 2022). Consequently, identifying mechanisms to maintain and enhance the well-being of geographically dispersed workers has become a pressing research and managerial concern (e.g., Becker, Belkin et al., 2022; Song & Gao, 2020; Straus et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2021). Organizations may foster employee well-being by introducing human resource management (HRM) strategies explicitly oriented toward well-being. Guest (2017) introduced the concept of well-being-oriented HRM which encompasses five domains: investment in workers, provision of engaging tasks, creation of a supportive social and physical work environment, facilitation of employee voice, and organizational support. While this framework is considered promising under conventional working conditions, its effectiveness in distance working contexts remains uncertain. HRM research emphasizes that the success of HRM practices depends on their visibility and salience, with reduced visibility being associated with diminished effectiveness (Bowen & Ostroff, 2015; Garg et al., 2021). Because distance workers are deprived of organizational symbols and direct face-

to-face interactions with colleagues (Ashforth, 2018; Wiesenfeld et al., 2016), the visibility and salience of well-being-oriented HR management may be compromised, thereby weakening its potential impact.

To date, there is limited comparative research assessing the effectiveness of identical HRM strategies—such as well-being-oriented HR management—in distance working versus non-distance working contexts. Much of the literature has concentrated on workers' experiences with remote work and how organizations might adapt HRM practices to suit such conditions (e.g., Günther et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2021). However, many organizations lack the capacity to redesign HRM systems and often rely on standard measures without evidence of their effectiveness across different work settings. This may lead to inefficiencies if established HRM practices lose their effectiveness in distance working contexts. Against this backdrop, the present study investigates whether the effectiveness of well-being-oriented HR management is reduced under distance working conditions compared to traditional office-based settings. Specifically, the study explores how distinct domains of Guest's (2017) well-being-oriented HR management framework relate to multiple dimensions of employee well-being—namely happiness, health, and relational well-being—in both distance working and non-distance working environments. Furthermore, based on the assumption that the positive association between WELL-BEING-ORIENTED HR MANAGEMENT and well-being decreases as the intensity of Distance working (measured by the number of days worked remotely per week) increases, this study examines the moderating role of distance working intensity.

This research provides several contributions. First, it enriches the distance working literature by offering empirical

evidence on the ways in which HRM can support employee well-being, which remains a central challenge in the remote work context. While the majority of studies concentrate on specific HRM dimensions (Becker, Belkin et al., 2022; Mihalache & Mihalache, 2022; Straus et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2021), this study employs Guest's holistic well-being-oriented HR management framework to examine HRM effects more comprehensively. Second, by comparing the relationship between well-being-oriented HR management and employee well-being across distance workers and non-distance workers, the study provides insights into the contextual boundaries of HRM, which scholars have shown to be highly contingent on context (Jackson et al., 2014). Employee perceptions of HRM practices are strongly shaped by contextual conditions (van Beurden et al., 2021), yet Guest's model does not explicitly account for such factors. This research contributes toward filling this gap. Third, the study addresses the moderating role of distance working intensity on the HRM–HRM-well-being relationship, which has been largely neglected in the literature (Becker, Belkin et al., 2022; Mihalache & Mihalache, 2022; Straus et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2021). Finally, by acknowledging the multidimensionality of both WELL-BEING-ORIENTED HR MANAGEMENT and employee well-being, this research provides a more nuanced account than studies that focus only on selective well-being dimensions (Becker, Belkin et al., 2022; Mihalache & Mihalache, 2022; Russo et al., 2020; Song & Gao, 2020; Straus et al., 2022). Indeed, HRM can generate differentiated and even contradictory effects across well-being dimensions (Guerci et al., 2022), and our study attempts to capture this complexity.

### Theory and Hypotheses

### Distance working and its implications for employee well-being

Employee well-being is broadly understood as the overall quality of an individual's work-related experiences and functioning (Warr, 2014). The construct has been investigated and operationalized in multiple ways. One of the most influential conceptual frameworks was proposed by Grant et al. (2013), who distinguished three primary dimensions of well-being. The first is happiness, encompassing both hedonic and eudaimonic aspects. Hedonic well-being reflects subjective experiences of joy, such as positive emotions toward one's work, whereas eudaimonic well-being emphasizes personal fulfillment and the realization of meaningful human potential. The second dimension is health, which captures freedom from physical ailments (e.g., back pain, headaches) and psychological difficulties (e.g., anxiety, depression). The third dimension is relational well-being, which reflects the perceived quality of interpersonal interactions, including social support, trust, and fairness within the workplace.

Distance working exerts multifaceted effects on these dimensions of employee well-being. On the positive side, it has been associated with increased job satisfaction (e.g., Gajendran & Harrison, 2015; Karácsony, 2021; Syrek et al., 2022) and improved work–life balance (Eurofound, 2020; Gajendran & Harrison, 2015; Karácsony, 2021). Nevertheless, evidence also highlights potential adverse consequences. Regarding happiness-related well-being, studies have reported negative associations between Distance working and job engagement (Sardeshmukh et al., 2013; Straus et al., 2022). Although distance working often correlates with greater job satisfaction, this effect does not appear universal (Golden, 2013; Möhring et al., 2021). Golden (2013), for example, demonstrated a curvilinear

relationship, whereby limited Distance working predicted higher satisfaction, but extensive Distance working reduced it.

Relational well-being is also at risk, as physical distance from colleagues often reduces opportunities for spontaneous communication and face-to-face interactions with peers and supervisors (van Zoonen & Sivunen, 2022; Wong et al., 2022). Consequently, social isolation has frequently been identified as a central challenge of distance working (Becker, Belkin et al., 2022; Carillo et al., 2021; van Zoonen & Sivunen, 2022; Wong et al., 2022).

Health-related well-being may similarly deteriorate in distance working settings. The erosion of boundaries between work and non-work life, coupled with the constant accessibility afforded by digital technologies, can heighten work-family conflict (Molino et al., 2020; van der Lippe & Lippé, 2020) and undermine recovery, as workers struggle to disengage from work-related demands (Charalampous et al., 2019). In addition, distance workers frequently encounter specific ICT-related demands that can exacerbate strain and lead to technostress (Day et al., 2013; Molino et al., 2020; Suh & Lee, 2017).

### **Well-being-oriented human resource management**

Traditional HRM approaches, such as high-performance work systems (HPWS) (Appelbaum et al., 2015; Huselid, 2017) or high-commitment HRM (Walton, 2016), primarily aim to enhance organizational performance. While such strategies may indirectly influence employee well-being, their effects remain contested, as debates around mutual gains versus conflicting outcomes continue (Peccei & van de Voorde, 2019). Recognizing that well-being constitutes both a moral obligation and a potential driver of performance, Guest (2017) advanced the concept of well-being-

oriented HRM as an alternative framework for analyzing HRM's impact on workers.

Drawing on the job demands-resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017) and the core conditions of high-quality working life (Walton, 2016), Guest (2017) identified five clusters of HRM practices conducive to fostering well-being. The first concerns investment in employee development, which strengthens competencies, enhances perceptions of security, and supports self-efficacy through training, mentoring, and career support. The second emphasizes providing engaging work, ensuring opportunities for autonomy, skill utilization, and task variety through job design. The third pertains to cultivating a positive social and physical environment, including health and safety provisions, equal opportunities, diversity initiatives, and fair reward systems. The fourth highlights the importance of employee voice, operationalized through two-way communication channels, surveys, and collective representation. The final domain underscores organizational support, encompassing participative management, a supportive climate, flexible work arrangements, and developmental performance management.

From this perspective, WELL-BEING-ORIENTED HR MANAGEMENT should exert a positive influence across all dimensions of employee well-being.

- **Hypothesis 1:** well-being-oriented HR management positively predicts employee happiness-related well-being.
- **Hypothesis 2:** well-being-oriented HR management positively predicts employee health-related well-being.
- **Hypothesis 3:** well-being-oriented HR management positively predicts employee relational well-being.

### **Visibility and salience of HRM under Distance working conditions**

In recent years, scholars have increasingly emphasized workers' subjective perceptions of HRM (Beijer et al., 2021; Hewett et al., 2018; van Beurden et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2020). Much of this work builds on Bowen and Ostroff's (2014) influential model, which posits that HRM practices continuously transmit organizational signals, often unintentionally, and workers may interpret the same practice in divergent ways. Variability in perception can concern the what (the practice itself), the why (the underlying organizational motives, or HR attributions; Hewett, 2019; Nishii et al., 2014), and the how (the framing and implementation of the practice).

Bowen and Ostroff (2014) further argue that effective HRM requires clear and consistent messaging, conceptualized through the notion of HRM system strength. A "strong" HRM system emerges when workers converge in their interpretations of practices and the behaviors they incentivize. Visibility and salience constitute crucial factors shaping this shared understanding. However, cognitive limitations constrain workers' capacity to process organizational stimuli (Fiske & Taylor, 2014), such that attitudes and behaviors are shaped by the information most prominent in their cognitive field (Schneider, 2015). For distance workers, physical separation from the workplace reduces the salience of organizational cues (Ashforth, 2020; Sardeshmukh et al., 2013; Wiesenfeld et al., 2014), including HRM practices. As a result, HRM initiatives may exert weaker effects on distance workers' well-being compared to non-distance workers (Garg et al., 2021).

Accordingly, we propose the following hypotheses:

- **Hypothesis 4:** The positive relationship between well-being-oriented HR management and employee happiness-

related well-being is weaker under distance working than under non-distance working conditions.

- **Hypothesis 5:** The positive relationship between well-being-oriented HR management and employee health-related well-being is weaker under distance working than under non-distance working conditions.
- **Hypothesis 6:** The positive relationship between well-being-oriented HR management and employee relational well-being is weaker under distance working than under non-distance working conditions.

Moreover, as distance working intensity increases, the visibility and salience of HRM practices are likely further diminished. Consequently, we anticipate a moderating effect:

- **Hypothesis 7:** Higher distance working intensity weakens the association between well-being-oriented HR management and happiness-related well-being.
- **Hypothesis 8:** Higher distance working intensity weakens the association between well-being-oriented HR management and health-related well-being.
- **Hypothesis 9:** Higher distance working intensity weakens the association between well-being-oriented HR management and relational well-being.

Finally, the relative significance of specific well-being-oriented HR management domains may vary between distance working and office-based contexts. Prior research highlights autonomy, participative management, flexible work arrangements, social connectedness, and health provisions as critical resources for distance workers (Franken et al., 2021;

Günther et al., 2022; Russo et al., 2020; Straus et al., 2022). Thus, the domains of organizational support, positive social and physical environment, and engaging work may play particularly vital roles in distance working contexts. However, empirical evidence directly comparing their importance across settings remains scarce, necessitating an exploratory approach.

### Method

#### Sample and procedure

Data were collected in Indonesia using a structured online survey administered by a professional research institute. Two waves of data collection were conducted: T1 (late March to mid-April 2021) and T2 (mid-June to July 2021). The final panel sample comprised  $N = 258$  workers who completed both surveys, with 50.6% identifying as male and 49.4% as female. Participants represented a diverse range of industries, including public administration (15.6%), the metal and electrical industries (10.3%), banking and insurance (8.7%), logistics and transportation (6.1%), and information technology and telecommunications (8.4%). The mean age was 45.21 years ( $SD = 12.94$ ).

To ensure a balanced representation of distance working categories, the sample was stratified into non-distance workers, occasional users ( $\leq 1$  day per week), moderate users (2–4 days per week), and full-time distance workers ( $\geq 5$  days per week). Importantly, only workers whose jobs were deemed distance workingable (by their own assessment) were included as non-distance workers, to prevent confounding comparisons. The distribution was as follows: 300 non-distance workers, 181 occasional users, 287 moderate users (2 days), 325 moderate users (3 days), 256 moderate users (4 days), and 631 full-time distance workers.

To address common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2014), well-being-oriented HR management practices were measured at T1, while well-being outcomes were assessed at T2. Additionally, we conducted a marker variable analysis using the smallest observed correlation as a proxy (Lindell & Whitney, 2015). The lowest correlation was below  $r = 0.001$ , suggesting that common method variance was unlikely to significantly affect results.

#### Measures

To assess well-being-oriented HR management, we followed Guest's (2017) theoretical framework. We considered investing in workers to include comprehensive selection, extensive investments in training and mentoring, and career support. For providing engaging work, we referred to jobs designed to provide autonomy and challenge, skill utilization, and the provision of information and feedback. We considered a positive social and physical environment to include the priority of health and safety, equal opportunities and diversity management, zero tolerance for bullying and harassment, required and optional social interaction, fair collective rewards and high basic pay, as well as employment security and employability. Voice consists of extensive two-way communication, employee surveys, and a collective representation. Organizational support includes participative and supportive management, involvement climate and practices, flexible and family-friendly work arrangements, and developmental performance management. Where possible, existing items were adopted from the literature (Jensen et al., 2013; Mostafa et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2018). The complete list of items can be found in Appendix Table A1. We conceptualized well-being-oriented HR management as a formative-formative higher-order construct, following Jiang et al.

(2012) and Hauff (2021). Thereby, individual HRM practices formatively operationalize the domains of well-being-oriented HR management (e.g., voice), which in turn formatively operationalize the overall construct.

Happiness and well-being were measured as a reflective second-order construct consisting of job satisfaction and work engagement. To assess job satisfaction, we used a single-item measure adopted from the Indonesian version of the Psychosocial Questionnaire. The reliability and validity of this measure were shown by Nübling et al. (2006). To measure work engagement, we followed Schaufeli et al. (2017), using the ultra-short measure for work engagement (UWES-3). Sample items were: 'Within the past four weeks, I have been full of exuberant energy at my work' or 'Within the past four weeks, I have been completely absorbed in my work'. Cronbach's Alpha was  $\alpha = 0.90$ .

Health well-being was measured as perceived psychological strain, which we assessed using the irritation scale by Mohr et al. (2005). Due to parsimony, the scale was shortened to four items. Sample items were: 'I have difficulty relaxing after work' and 'I get irritated easily, although I don't want this to happen'. Cronbach's Alpha was  $\alpha = 0.87$ .

Relational well-being was assessed by the indicator social isolation, which we measured using a professional isolation scale by Golden et al. (2008). Due to parsimony, the scale was shortened to three items. Sample items were 'I miss face-to-face contact with my co-workers' and 'I feel isolated'. Cronbach's Alpha was  $\alpha = 0.85$ .

To assess distance working intensity, we asked participants about the extent to which they were working on average over the past four weeks, using a six-point scale

(from not at all, up to 1 day, 2 days, 3 days, 4 days, 5 or more days per week).

Well-being-oriented HR management and social isolation were rated on a five-point Likert scale from 1 = 'not at all true' to 5 = 'completely true'. Work engagement and strain were rated on a five-point Likert scale from 1 = 'never' to 5 = 'almost always', and job satisfaction was rated on a five-point Likert scale from 1 = 'very dissatisfied' to 5 = 'very satisfied'.

Furthermore, we considered different control variables that were mentioned as relevant to our dependent variables in previous studies (Donati et al., 2021; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Heiden et al., 2021; Park & Cho, 2022), or where we suspected a relationship in our research area. Namely, we considered age, gender (0 = male, 1 = female), marital status (married, not married, living separately, divorced or widowed, single), care responsibilities (0 = no responsibilities, 1 = care responsibilities), education level (1 = no educational qualification, 2 = secondary school diploma, 3 = middle school diploma, 4 = high school diploma, 5 = vocational training, 6 = university degree, 7 = doctorate), branch (0 = public sector, 1 = private sector), employment status (0 = temporary employment, 1 = permanent employment), leadership responsibilities (0 = no leadership responsibilities, 1 = leadership responsibilities), prior experience with distance working and changes in distance working intensity between T1 and T2 (0 = changes, 1 = no changes).

### Analysis

To facilitate a more refined understanding of the distinct effects of well-being-oriented HR management on various aspects of employee well-being, while at the same time minimizing potential bias resulting from unexplored relationships

between well-being dimensions (Günther et al., 2022), we developed three separate models, each corresponding to one dimension of well-being (see Figure 1).

To empirically examine our hypotheses, two complementary analyses were carried out: a multi-group analysis aimed at capturing differences between workers engaged in distance working and those who are not, and a moderation analysis designed to assess the role of distance working intensity. In the multi-group analysis, participants were classified into two groups: individuals who did not distance working at all and those who distance worked five days per week. This procedure yielded a final sample of  $N = 931$ . Hybrid workers were deliberately excluded to avoid contamination from overlapping influences that may arise across different work contexts (e.g., social isolation related to distance working versus office-based work). For the moderation analysis, participants who distance worked between one and five days per week were included, resulting in a larger sample size of  $N = 1680$ .

In line with the methodological recommendations provided by Nielsen and Raswant (2018), we initially estimated models that incorporated all of the aforementioned control variables. Subsequently, non-significant control variables were systematically eliminated, while only those exerting a meaningful effect on the dependent variables were retained in the final estimation (Figure 1). The correlation matrices for the multi-group and moderation analyses are presented in Appendix Tables A3 and A4, respectively.

The final models were estimated using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) with the SmartPLS 3 software (Ringle, 2015). This

method was particularly appropriate, as well-being-oriented HR management was conceptualized as a formative-formative higher-order construct (Ringle et al., 2020). Following the guidelines of Becker, Cheah, and colleagues (2022), we applied the two-stage approach, employing latent variable scores of the lower-order predictors to estimate the higher-order construct. The analyses were performed using the following standardized settings: path-weighting scheme, 300 iterations, stop criterion = 0.0000001, and mean substitution for missing values. Statistical significance was determined through bootstrapping, using 5,000 subsamples, with the same number of observations as in the original dataset, applying the no-sign-change option.

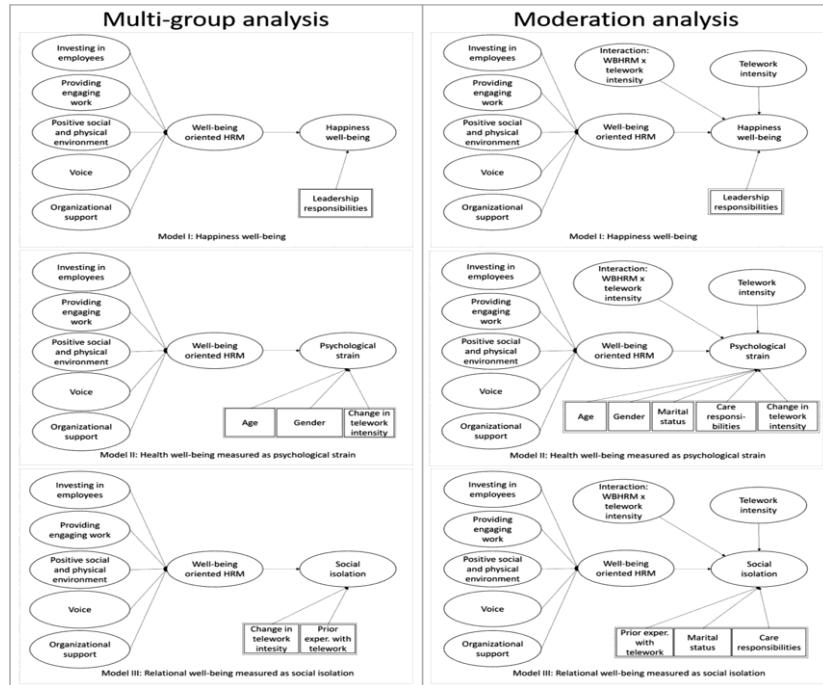


Figure 1. Conceptual Models.

## Results

### Measurement Model

To establish the validity and reliability of the reflective measurement models, we adhered to the procedures outlined by Hair et al. (2017) and assessed indicator reliability, internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity.

In the multi-group analysis, one strain indicator displayed a slightly lower value than the recommended threshold of 0.708. Nevertheless, both  $AVE = 0.76$  and  $CR = 0.92$  met satisfactory standards (Hair et al., 2019). A similar result was observed in the moderation analysis, where the same strain item was slightly below the cut-off, but  $AVE (0.73)$  and  $CR (0.91)$  again demonstrated acceptable reliability. All items for engagement exhibited loadings above the 0.708 threshold across both analyses, with reliability indicators remaining strong (multi-group analysis:  $AVE = 0.74$ ;  $CR = 0.92$ ; moderation analysis:  $AVE = 0.83$ ;  $CR = 0.94$ ). Likewise, all social isolation items showed significant loadings above 0.708 in both analytic approaches, with  $AVE$  and  $CR$  values well within the acceptable range

(multi-group analysis:  $AVE = 0.79$ ;  $CR = 0.92$ ; moderation analysis:  $AVE = 0.76$ ;  $CR = 0.90$ ). No issues of discriminant validity were observed, as all heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratios were below 0.85, confirming robust construct distinctiveness in both analyses.

The formative models at both the lower- and higher-order levels were further evaluated with respect to multicollinearity and indicator contribution. None of the variance inflation factor (VIF) values exceeded the critical threshold of 5, ruling out multicollinearity concerns (Hair et al., 2017; Hair et al., 2019).

For the multi-group analysis, the majority of indicator weights were statistically significant. For indicators with non-significant weights, outer loadings were assessed to determine their contribution. Three lower-order indicators exhibited loadings below 0.5 but were retained in the model due to their significant outer loadings. All higher-order indicators had loadings above 0.5 and were statistically significant. A complete overview of weights

and loadings is provided in Appendix Table A1.

Similarly, in the moderation analysis, most indicator weights were significant. Four lower-order indicators showed loadings slightly below 0.5; however, they were retained because of their significant loadings, reinforcing their relevance to the construct. None of the higher-order indicators fell below the threshold, and all were significant. Detailed results for the formative measurement models are presented in Appendix Table A2.

Collectively, these findings confirm that the measurement models demonstrate strong reliability, validity, and robustness, thereby providing a solid foundation for testing the structural relationships within the proposed research model.

### **Structural model**

The control models in the multi-group analysis can explain 4.4% variance in happiness well-being, 3.1% variance in health well-being, and 3.6% variance in relational well-being. The full models, on the other hand, can explain 36.1% variance in happiness well-being, 16.7% variance in health well-being, and 10.3% variance in relational well-being. The control models in the moderation analysis can explain 4.2% variance in happiness well-being, 3.2% variance in health well-being, and 2.5% variance in relational well-being. The full models can explain 31.4% variance in happiness well-being, 14.7% variance in health well-being, and 5.3% variance in relational well-being. Thus, all values of the full models significantly exceeded the values of the control model.

### **Relationships between well-being-oriented HR management and employee well-being**

The results in Table 1 show that well-being-oriented HR management is positively

related to happiness, both for distance workers ( $\beta = 0.60$ ;  $p < .001$ ) and non-distance workers ( $\beta = 0.60$ ;  $p < .001$ ), supporting Hypothesis 1. Furthermore, the results in Table 1 show that well-being-oriented HR management is negatively related to psychological strain, both for distance workers ( $\beta = -0.40$ ;  $p < .001$ ) and non-distance workers ( $\beta = -0.37$ ;  $p < .001$ ), which in turn represents a positive relationship between well-being-oriented HR management and health-related well-being, supporting Hypothesis 2. For relational well-being (Table 1) we found a positive relationship between well-being-oriented HR management and social isolation for distance workers ( $\beta = 0.23$ ;  $p < .001$ ) and non-distance workers ( $\beta = 0.29$ ;  $p < .001$ ). Both results contradict Hypothesis 3.

The relationships of well-being-oriented HR management and workers' well-being do not show significant differences between distance workers and non-distance workers. This was found in case of happiness well-being ( $\beta = 0.00$ ;  $p = .487$ ), psychological strain ( $\beta = 0.04$ ;  $p = .281$ ) and social isolation ( $\beta = 0.08$ ;  $p = .105$ ). Hypotheses 4, 5, and 6 are thus rejected. Furthermore, we hypothesized that distance working intensity moderates the relationship between well-being-oriented HR management and workers' well-being. Table 2 shows non-significant moderating effects for happiness ( $\beta = 0.02$ ;  $p = .464$ ), health ( $\beta = -0.01$ ;  $p = .733$ ) and relational well-being ( $\beta = 0.02$ ;  $p = .486$ ) contradicting Hypotheses 7, 8 and 9.

### **The importance of specific domains**

Another aim of this study was to gain insights into which domains of well-being-oriented HR management are particularly important to foster the well-being of distance workers and non-distance workers. This relative importance is represented by the weights of the domains,

as they reflect the value that specific domains contribute to promoting employee well-being through well-being-oriented HR management as a whole. In terms of happiness well-being, our results show significant differences in the importance of specific domains for the well-being of teleworkers and non-distance workers. The domain *providing engaging work* in particular ( $\beta = 0.65$ ;  $p < .001$ ) as well as the domain *voice* ( $\beta = 0.33$ ;  $p = .018$ ) are important to foster happiness well-being in the non-distance working context, while the remaining domains are not significant. In the context of tele-work, *providing engaging work* ( $\beta = 0.34$ ;  $p < .001$ ), *positive social and physical environment* ( $\beta = 0.50$ ;  $p < .001$ ) and *organizational support* ( $\beta = 0.36$ ;  $p < .001$ ) are significant and therefore important to increase happiness well-being. Contrary to the non-distance working context, *voice* is negatively related to happiness well-being in the distance working context ( $\beta = -0.24$ ;  $p = .015$ ).

Further, our results show significant differences in the importance of specific domains to foster health and well-being between distance workers and non-distance workers. The domain *positive social and physical environment* is particularly important to foster the health and well-being of distance workers ( $\beta = 0.82$ ;  $p < .001$ ) and non-distance workers ( $\beta = 0.74$ ;  $p < .001$ ). Non-distance workers' health well-being can further be promoted by *organizational support* ( $\beta = 0.39$ ;  $p = .025$ ). *Investing in workers*, however, is negatively related to the health well-being of non-distance workers ( $\beta = -0.37$ ;  $p = .031$ ), while the relationship is non-significant in a distance working context ( $\beta = -0.09$ ;  $p = .527$ ). The remaining domains are non-significant for distance workers and non-distance workers.

In the case of relational well-being, our results show that *investing in workers* is the only driver for the relationship between well-being-oriented HR management and social isolation in the Distance working context ( $\beta = 0.63$ ;  $p = .002$ ), while the remaining domains are non-significant. In a non-distance working context, a *positive social and physical environment* ( $\beta = 0.39$ ;  $p = .007$ ) and *voice* ( $\beta = 0.53$ ;  $p < .001$ ) are responsible for an increase in social isolation, whereas *engaging work* ( $\beta = -0.40$ ;  $p = .005$ ) with a negative weight, counteracts this relation.

The analysis demonstrates that well-being-oriented human resource management (well-being-oriented HR management) is positively associated with workers' happiness and health-related well-being, while concurrently exacerbating perceptions of social isolation. This pattern emerges consistently among both distance workers and non-distance workers. Moreover, the intensity of distance working does not significantly moderate the link between well-being-oriented HR management and workers' well-being. Distinctions between distance workers and non-distance workers are observable only in the relative strength of specific domains influencing the relationship between well-being-oriented HR management and employee well-being.

## Discussion

### Theoretical and Research Implications

This study advances scholarly understanding by examining the association between well-being-oriented HR management and multiple dimensions of employee well-being across distance working and non-distance working contexts.

First, we extend the literature on distance working by offering comprehensive empirical evidence on the role of HRM in supporting the well-being of distance

workingers. While prior research has often focused on individual HRM practices (Mihalache & Mihalache, 2022; Straus et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2021), our study adopts a holistic framework of well-being-oriented HR management. The findings reveal that although not all elements of Guest's (2017) model of well-being-oriented HR management contribute equally, a broad range of HRM practices can enhance distance workingers' happiness and health. For example, consistent with Straus et al. (2022) and Becker, Belkin et al. (2022), autonomy as a component of engaging work is positively associated with well-being. Furthermore, our results demonstrate that engaging work characterized by autonomy, skill utilization, adequate challenge, and the provision of feedback can significantly foster happiness-related well-being. Similarly, building on earlier findings (Russo et al., 2020; Straus et al., 2022), high job security and strong teamwork—reflecting a positive social and physical environment—emerge as central drivers of well-being. Other HRM practices, such as competitive compensation, diversity management, zero tolerance for bullying and harassment, prioritization of occupational safety, and protection against work overload, further reinforce distance workingers' happiness and health. In line with previous studies (Chong et al., 2020; Mihalache & Mihalache, 2022), the evidence also indicates that organizational support—including participative management and family-friendly work arrangements—enhances distance workingers' happiness-related well-being.

Second, our study contributes to the debate on the contextual boundaries of HRM (Jackson et al., 2014). The results indicate that well-being-oriented HR management maintains a comparable impact on happiness and health among both distance workingers and non-distance workingers. However, the relative influence of specific

well-being-oriented HR management domains varies depending on work context. For non-distance workingers, happiness well-being is particularly fostered by engaging work and employee voice. By contrast, for distance workingers, in addition to engaging work, organizational support and a positive social and physical environment exert greater importance. This difference may explain why some hypotheses regarding the reduced efficacy of well-being-oriented HR management in distance working contexts were unsupported. In line with Garg et al. (2021), the salience of HRM practices depends on how well they address workers' contextual needs. Because distance working often amplifies challenges such as social isolation and work–family conflict, well-being-oriented HR management practices that target these issues remain especially salient to distance workingers.

Third, our findings suggest that employee voice exerts a divergent influence across contexts. While positively associated with happiness in traditional office settings, it appears negatively related to distance workingers' happiness. Building on Guest (2017), this unexpected outcome may be explained by the costs of speaking up. Expressing voice requires additional effort beyond regular tasks and may result in overload or work–family conflict (Bolino & Turnley, 2015). Furthermore, reliance on computer-mediated communication in distance working complicates participation by limiting access to non-verbal cues (Taylor, 2014). Previous research has shown that voice can negatively affect well-being in conditions of high job insecurity (Röllmann et al., 2021) or low organizational support (Zacher et al., 2019). Our findings align with these results, suggesting that higher demands in distance working contexts magnify the negative consequences of voice for happiness-related well-being.

With respect to health-related well-being, the study shows that a positive social and physical environment is the key factor reducing psychological strain among distance workers, whereas organizational support also plays a role in mitigating strain for non-distance workers. Notably, organizational support may have unintended costs for distance workers, since participative management and involvement practices can increase workload and stress (Bolino & Turnley, 2015). Furthermore, investing in workers, including training and career development, reduces strain for non-distance workers but is not significant in the distance working context. For distance workers, such investments may instead be perceived as resource-building mechanisms that help manage the unique demands of remote work (O'Brien et al., 2018).

Regarding relational well-being, well-being-oriented HR management is consistently associated with heightened social isolation across both contexts, thereby reducing relational well-being. For distance workers, the domain of investing in workers—especially training and development initiatives—emerges as the main factor, as these often reduce interaction with colleagues. Nevertheless, the explanatory power of the model is limited, suggesting that traditional HRM practices within Guest's (2017) framework explain only a small fraction of distance workers' relational well-being. This underscores the need for HRM strategies specifically designed to mitigate social isolation, such as fostering informal communication (Wang et al., 2021). For non-distance workers, social isolation is influenced by domains such as employee voice and the physical and social environment, while engaging in work reduces isolation. While the negative

impact of voice is understandable—since speaking up may strain interpersonal relations (Milliken et al., 2015)—the finding that a positive social and physical environment increases isolation remains puzzling and warrants further inquiry.

Fourth, the study contributes by investigating the moderating role of distance working intensity—a factor often overlooked in previous research (Becker, Belkin et al., 2022; Mihalache & Mihalache, 2022; Straus et al., 2022). The findings show no significant moderating effects, suggesting that well-being-oriented HR management's effectiveness is independent of the degree of distance working. Instead, it is the relevance of specific well-being-oriented HR management domains, rather than the overall system, that varies across contexts. Finally, by assessing well-being as a multidimensional construct, this research highlights the importance of addressing its complexity (Becker, Belkin et al., 2022). The results reveal a trade-off effect, whereby well-being-oriented HR management promotes happiness and health while simultaneously diminishing relational well-being.

### **Practical Implications for Organizations and Management**

The findings carry several implications for managerial practice. Organizations should continue to invest in well-being-oriented HR management as a means to strengthen workers' happiness and health, regardless of distance working status. However, different HRM domains require emphasis depending on the work context.

For non-distance workers, practices such as job enrichment, decision-making autonomy, skill variety, and robust mechanisms for employee voice (e.g., two-way communication and collective representation) are central for enhancing

happiness well-being. For distance workers, however, organizations must complement engaging work with a strong focus on creating a supportive social and physical environment (e.g., job security, teamwork, diversity management) and providing organizational support (e.g., participative leadership and flexible, family-friendly work arrangements).

Importantly, organizations should remain cautious about encouraging employee voice among distance workers, as it may have unintended negative consequences on happiness and well-being by exacerbating workload and stress. Reducing demands may help mitigate these adverse effects. Moreover, because well-being-oriented HR management is associated with higher perceptions of social isolation, managers should supplement traditional practices with targeted interventions to reduce isolation, such as promoting informal communication and peer networking opportunities (Wang et al., 2021).

### **Limitations and further research**

Although we shed some light on the effectiveness of well-being-oriented HR management in the context of distance working and non-distance working, considering the multidimensionality of well-being-oriented HR management and employee well-being, our findings have limitations, which offer the potential for further research. First, even though we have incorporated a time lag of about three months between the collection of our independent and dependent variables, our study design does not allow for causal interpretation. Therefore, the derived

implications of our study should be treated with caution. Second, our data was collected between March and July 2021, which bears the potential risk of having a bias due to the ongoing global pandemic situation. The vaccination campaign started in Indonesia at the beginning of 2021. Around March, the third wave of infection broke, and the number of new infections decreased. At the time of our survey, the outbreak of the pandemic was about a year ago (Thurau & Bosen, 2021). Thus, employers and workers were rather familiar with the situation. Nevertheless, transferring the results to a non-pandemic situation should be done with caution. Further studies conducted after the end of the pandemic could make an important contribution to the distance working literature.

Besides addressing these limitations, there are other potential avenues for future research. Our study reveals that distance working bears specific challenges for distance workers' well-being, such as social isolation, which may not be overcome by traditional HRM practices alone. Therefore, additional studies could examine how HRM can best address challenges like social isolation. Future research could also examine if and how specific HRM practices or domains interact when influencing distance workers' well-being. Additional research could also explore whether the relationship between HRM and distance workers' well-being is dependent on further context variables such as branch, job type, or individual differences such as personality or experience with distance working.

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